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REVIEWS OF BOOKS.

Foundations of Knowledge. By ALEXANDER THOMAS ORMOND.
London and New York, The Macmillan Co., 1900.—pp. xxvii,
528.

This treatise, which combines epistemology with considerable material of a metaphysical nature, is in its general method of procedure less polemic and more positively constructive than other recent essays along similar lines. Discussion of opposing theories is subordinate, and does not display that keen zest which is evinced in the 'dialectic for dialectic's sake'—one is tempted to call it—of some epistemological writings. I am far from saying that the polemics of earlier essays may not have been necessary, but it is cheering to the patient reader to discover that he need not fight over the rather tiresome battle of idealism versus realism with the heavy artillery on each side aimed at an imaginary position, nor be instructed too thoroughly in the fallacies of materialism and agnosticism.

Whatever one may think of the author's results, there is likely to be general agreement that the most hopeful line for progress is in following the spirit of Kant's *Critique* rather than in arguing his work. This means, first, an analysis of the science of to-day, especially of psychology, biology, and the historical and social sciences. It may be that none of these sciences is yet sufficiently advanced to yield the results which the work of Newton presented to the insight of Kant; but there is certainly some material ready, and Professor Ormond has attempted to utilize portions of it. The influence of the past is nevertheless still dominant in the relative prominence accorded to the mathematical and physical categories of space, time, quantity, substance, and cause, as compared with the biological category of evolution, the psychological categories of individuality and personal identity, and the social category of community.

In the second place, to follow the spirit of Kant's *Critique* means a reconstruction of the meaning of experience and the self on the basis of the analysis outlined above; and, correlative to this reconstruction, a revision of the conception and scope of knowledge and its function in the work of life. This too has been attempted by the work before us, but, in my judgment, the reconstruction of the meaning of experience would better have followed than preceded the detailed analysis.

The book comprises three parts. Part I., "The Ground Concepts of

Knowledge," is occupied chiefly with the notions of experience and the relations of experience to reality and to knowledge. Part II., "Evolution of the Categories of Knowledge," covers the general ground of Kant's *Æsthetic* and *Analytic*, with additional chapters on *æsthetic* categories, categories of the subject consciousness, the world of individuals, and the consciousness of community. Part III., "The Transcendent Factor in Knowledge," deals partly with questions falling within the province of a theory of knowledge, such as knowledge and belief, judgments of truth, and judgments of value, the mystic element in knowledge, but a large part of its material, might well be called metaphysics, dealing with various aspects of 'The Transcendent.'

In its standpoint, the work may be not unfairly characterized as an attempt to incorporate elements of intuitionism and mysticism into a critical theory of experience, or possibly some would reverse the emphasis, and say an attempt to support the results of intuitionism and mysticism by a critical theory of experience. At any rate, the reader will detect various traces of heterogeneous lines of thought, and his judgment of the value of the result will depend in part on his judgment as to the success of the attempted union.

Among the more superficial evidences of the two lines of thought, on the one hand, are the chapters devoted to the categories of the object and the subject, and on the other, the chapter on the mystic element in knowledge, in which it is maintained that "it is in the higher forms of emotional experiences—those which belong to the stage of the higher immediacy—that self-consciousness attains its highest level and most complete realization."

The two-fold nature of the system appears in the statements regarding experience and knowledge. "The notion of knowledge is that of the internal rationality of experience." There are two fundamental modes of reducing experience to intelligible form, the one mechanical, the other teleological. "Both modes are to be conceived as rational, and therefore as included modes of experience, and both are subject to the canons of rational necessity, but in a somewhat different way." The phrases, "rationality of experience," and "canons of rational necessity," would at first blush suggest either principles of a logical, mathematical, or causal nature, or of the principle of sufficient reason in its aspect of purpose. But in Part II, chapter IX, we are taught that the principle of unity is an *æsthetic* category. "The demand for unity in our world is the voice of the *æsthetic* consciousness." In the chapter on judgments of truth and value, the attempt

is made to assign an epistemological worth to judgments of value. The affirmation of certain beliefs as true is said to rest on the conviction that they are implicated in the rationality of the world. "And this conviction rests in the last analysis *on our intuition of the truth that the ultimate harmony of the good and the true . . . is involved in the essence of that idea of rationality the denial of which means the wreck of all knowledge*" (p. 354). Now it is to be presumed that this "intuition," which discovers that the unity of true and good is necessary to rationality, is what has been previously described as "rational intuition," and declared to be the third and highest stage in the relation of the knowing activity to experience. The three stages are defined as follows: (1) that of the "lower immediacy in which simple sensation dominates"; here the important factors are feeling or pleasure-pain, and volition; (2) that of mediacy, that point in experience where feeling and action are in a sense forced asunder and a mediating term, reflection or deliberation, makes its appearance; (3) that of the 'higher immediacy' which "is to be regarded as dominantly emotional" (pp. 80-87). It would appear, therefore, that the phrases 'irrational' and 'absurd,' are or may be translated into 'emotionally unsatisfactory' when we are dealing with the ultimate and more metaphysical problems. A similar superiority of feeling over knowledge and volition is suggested in the statement as to the final purpose of consciousness. "What consciousness seeks in its world as its very last end is a state of feeling, a satisfaction in which it can rest."

The question as to the validity of the author's conclusions so far as they concern ultimate metaphysical problems, will then hinge on the acceptance of the above criterion of truth. It is in perfect accord with the logical outcome of the Kantian critical method to maintain, as the author maintains with much force and clarity of view, that the test of truth must be found in the self, not outside the self; and, further, that we must regard as the highest unification and organization of the world of experience, that which corresponds to the highest unification of self—to the highest expression of self-consciousness. But it is a proposition which will be slower to find acceptance that "it is in the higher forms of emotional experiences that self-consciousness attains its highest level and most complete realization." And the same hesitation will be likely to arise over the author's treatment of the judgment. "In judging the essential act is one in which the self either accepts or rejects proffered content." "The function of judgment is an affair of the æsthetic consciousness, inasmuch as the essence of the relation of true and false is constituted by the æsthetic category of

unity" (pp. 238-241). In the higher immediacy of rational intuition referred to above, we are to "conceive this judgment-function, which is explicitly a self-relating activity, and in that form essentially emotional, as becoming implicit as the unifying core of an emotional state" (p. 84). Is it reasonable to place a higher normative value upon an implicit than upon an explicit self-relating activity?

There is once more a suggestion of two not wholly harmonized lines of thought in the attitude toward 'experience,' the crux of modern theories of knowledge and reality. Unusual attention is given to the concept of experience and its relation to the concepts, consciousness and reality. The world is affirmed to be "through and through experience." Experience is "inclusive of all reality as its content." We may not think of any things-in-themselves outside experience, or of anything which transcends experience. We may and must suppose a possible as well as an actual experience, and it is the possible rather than the actual which encompasses all reality, but it is still experience (pp. 89-92, 356 ff.). So far critical idealism. The other tendency seems to me to inhere in the doctrine of the transcendent. The author will certainly refuse to admit any dualism here, for he has taken especial pains to speak of the "transcendent as experience," and to give to it all the attributes of finite experience raised to the power of infinity; but nevertheless the lines by which this 'transcendent' is reached seem to be rather methods of inferring some absolute, which is metaphysically separate, than those of discovering a universal within. For instance, the argument on pp. 356 ff., is almost precisely that of Descartes, viz., that a notion of the perfect or the infinite implies an objective cause for it, since the finite could not produce such an idea of itself. Here the reply of Descartes's critic is still in point: The mind is greater than any of its ideas. Professor Ormond goes on to assert a point in connection with each of the categories where the transcendent manifests itself. In the first place, from the standpoint of presentation he maintains that the fact of 'coerciveness,' of our 'receptive' relation, of the 'consciousness of resistance' testifies to the existence of the transcendent. Now this argument either has some such implication as that which underlies Kant's doctrine of sensations as 'given,' or else it asserts merely that one content of experience, viz., a stone, acts on another content of experience, viz., my hand, but in this case there is nothing transcendent involved. Again on page 358 we read: "The genesis of dimension involves a point of dimensionless initiative. The significance of this is, surely, that at the point where our experiences touches and defines the objective under the form of space and

time, being asserts itself as transcendent to these operations." I must confess that while this fact does unquestionably indicate the conceptual, *i. e.*, the constructive character of the mathematician's space, it does not disclose to me anything more transcendent than my consciousness.

I do not mean to imply that the author has not aimed to give a critical statement and solution. The chapter on the transcendent subject grapples with the problem again, under its ontological aspects, and an attempt is made to mediate between pantheism and theism, an inclusive, and an exclusive or transcendent absolute. But it is difficult to avoid the impression of a combination of standpoints in which complete consistency has not been attained.

Turning to some of the psychological aspects of the work, there are several interesting features, some of which were referred to at the outset. In the treatment of the categories, the separate consideration accorded to the presentative and the conceptual aspects of space and time is desirable. It would have been a gain in the logical clearness and vigor of the treatment of the other categories, *e. g.*, substance, cause, etc., if a similar distinction were made. Cause, for instance, is said to derive from volitional experience. "The will-element is, however, soon abstracted from, while the notion of agency persists." This might be regarded as the imagery of the idea of cause, but the function and value of cause as concept cannot be thus determined.

The category of community or interaction is derived from social relations. Lotze's treatment of the category is accepted as partial, but it is contended by the author that the notion of interaction requires us to conceive interacting things as social units in mutual intercourse. He admits that to conceive social units which at the same time are not conscious units is "full of difficulties," but is convinced that it offers fewer intrinsic difficulties than any other scheme. Is it not possible, one is prompted to ask, that the difficulty of explaining interaction on any other than a social analogy is due in part at least to the previous individualistic conception of substances? Are substances so highly individualized, or is that a distinction reserved for persons?

The chapter in this series upon the categories, which is likely to challenge most attention and criticism, is that on "The *Æsthetic* Categories." This treats the principle of unity, which is the ground of the organization of our world, first through time and space, then through dynamic categories of interdependence. Professor Ormond holds that this principle is fundamentally a demand of the *æsthetic*, rather than of the cognitive or volitional consciousness. It is certainly desirable to call renewed attention to the fact that the categories are but the 'modes of a growing experience,' and that 'experience' is

not to be conceived solely in terms of cognitive elements. But is it true that unity is peculiarly the outcome of the æsthetic consciousness? Have not the practical needs—the economic, social, and ethical requirements—been at least as important a factor in bringing about the organization and unification of experience? The successful unification of experience, and the correlative expression or assertion of the self, have undoubtedly an æsthetic value, but this does not necessarily involve the position that this æsthetic value is the determining factor. The question involved is allied to that raised by the statement as to the end of consciousness. Is ‘what consciousness seeks in its world as its very last end’ a ‘state of feeling’?

The chapters on the subject and community consciousness with their categories of individuality, self-identity, personality, personal identity, and social interaction, contain much that invites mention. Of especial interest are the efforts to relate the subject categories to those of objective experience, and to show the significance for law and ethics of the development of the social consciousness. Collision and conflict as well as imitation, are recognized as factors in developing the social consciousness. If these factors were considered more carefully, it would appear I think, that their functions are quite distinct. Imitation has its effects in the phenomena of custom, and in general in those of the primitive naïve solidarity of tribe or family. It does not explain the phenomena of conscious unity involved in full moral life. This demands unity of interest as well as similarity of functioning.

The third part of the work, as already noted, deals largely with ultimate metaphysical and theological questions. The author interests himself particularly in the questions as to the nature of the absolute, and its relation to the finite. The question as to the validity of the method on which the author’s conclusions are based has already been stated, and space will not permit any detailed mention of the results.

To sum up, Professor Ormond is to be congratulated for having presented the results of such widely extended investigations on ultimate problems with such eminent fairness of spirit and in well-digested form. It is not necessary to endorse his ultimate standard in order to find stimulus and suggestion in his discussions. His style (barring his unfortunate boycott of the word ‘shall,’ *e. g.*, “we will find,” which irritates the reader on nearly every page) is clear, and philosophic discussion should welcome the presentation of the claims of feeling along with those of intellect and will, in the effort to gain a more adequate interpretation of the world and the individual.

JAMES H. TUFTS.